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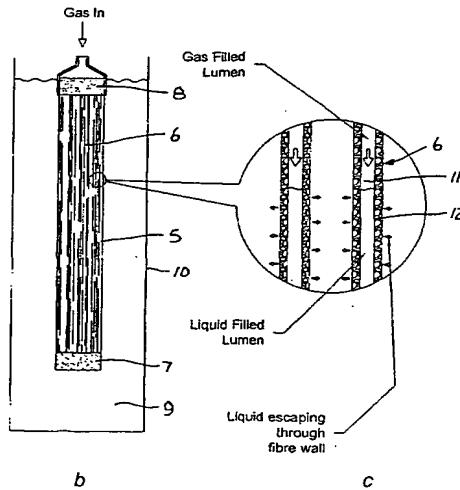
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(54) Title: BACKWASH AND CLEANING METHOD



(57) Abstract: A method of concentrating the solids of a liquid suspension by providing a pressure differential across the walls of permeable, hollow membranes (6) immersed in the liquid suspension (9). The liquid suspension (9) is applied to the outer surface of the porous hollow membranes (6) to induce and sustain filtration through the membrane walls (12) wherein some of the liquid suspension passes through the walls (12) of the membranes (6) to be drawn off as clarified liquid or permeate from the hollow membrane lumens (11), and at least some of the solids are retained on or in the hollow membranes (6) or otherwise as suspended solids within the liquid (9) surrounding the membranes (6). The method includes periodically backwashing the membrane pores using the permeate by applying a gas at a pressure below the bubble point to the membrane lumens (11) to progressively displace at least some of the liquid permeate within the lumens (11) through the membrane pores resulting in removal the solids retained on or in the hollow membranes into the bulk liquid (9) surrounding the membranes (6).

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